



**A Message
From
The
Secretary**

With the legislative session well underway it is an extremely busy time of year for all of us as we work with lawmakers to improve legislation for Kansans. Our legislative team is meeting three times a week, and with assistance from many of you, is closely monitoring our legislative initiatives to ensure fiscal notes and testimony are provided as needed and to track many other bills of interest to our agency.

In addition to working to improve state laws for Kansans, KDHE has finalized proposed regulations to improve protections for Kansas children and protections for sensitive groundwater in the state. The childcare regulations will provide state oversight for “drop-in” programs in which children are allowed to come and go at their own volition and at unscheduled times. Previously these programs have been unregulated.

The sensitive groundwater regulations will add additional controls for municipal, commercial, industrial and livestock facilities. These proposed changes will provide site-specific requirements for the Equus Beds region in and around Wichita as well as other sensitive groundwater areas. The regulations are based on a comprehensive, scientific approach to ensure the application of standards applies appropriately and effectively.

Recently Governor Sebelius announced the transfer of a portion of the Food Protection and Consumer Safety Program to the Department of Agriculture. This will occur through an Executive Reorganization Order (ERO). Under this order a majority of the licenses remain at KDHE, therefore there is a potential for a very small number of KDHE’s Food Safety employees to be transferred to the Department of Agriculture. Licenses for restaurants and hotel/motels (approximately 12,800 licenses) will remain under the authority of the KDHE, while licenses for grocery stores, convenience stores, food processing and manufacturing facilities (approximately 3,800 licenses) will be transferred to the Department of Agriculture. KDHE and the KDA staff are working together regarding this ERO and will provide additional information as more details are finalized.

The four employee task force groups each presented their recommendations during a final joint task force meeting last week. It is evident that the task force members devoted a great deal of time and effort to the tasks of studying how KDHE can make improvements in the areas of communication, professionalism, employee recognition, and employee health and wellness. I want to congratulate each task force member on the tremendous efforts and contributions to this important process. A thorough review of each report is now underway to further evaluate the findings and recommendations and to determine how best to implement some of these recommendations over the coming months.

Be Well,